

# B.A. Bulletin

February 2001

## Important Health Benefits News for Benefits Administrators

## Upcoming Events

### FEB

**February 19** ♦ President's Day  
Holiday

**February 24** ♦ Last day of  
General Assembly session

**February 26** ♦ Spotlight and  
materials for July 1 released to  
printer

### MAR

**March 16** ♦ Spotlight notification  
issue mailed to B.A.s, materials  
available for orders

**March 19** ♦ Spotlight mailed to  
employees

**March 26** ♦ Benefits  
administrator and employee  
meetings begin in Richmond

### APR

**April 1** ~ Open Enrollment  
begins for colleges and  
universities (begins May 1 for all  
other state agencies)

**April 4** ♦ B.A. and employee  
meetings end in Portsmouth

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## Open Enrollment Coming Soon

Two Open Enrollment windows will occur this spring for state employees to make plan and membership changes that take effect July 1. Employees at colleges and universities will have the opportunity to make changes from April 1 – May 1. A similar window will open for all other state agency employees from May 1 – 31. The last day to exercise a floating enrollment will be May 15 for a June 1 effective date.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recently issued final regulations applicable for cafeteria plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2001. These final regulations are very clear about the administration of health care plans including the new status change and cost and coverage rules. Changes in the final regulations were incorporated in the Flexible Benefits program on Jan. 1 and will be included for health care plans beginning July 1. Among other issues, the new regulations clarified use of an annual open enrollment period instead of the previously used floating enrollment.

## Amnesty Offered This Spring

In conjunction with Open Enrollment, an amnesty period will occur so that employees may remove ineligible dependents without penalty from their health care plans. Changes made during the amnesty period will take effect on July 1. Additional details will be provided soon to all benefits administrators.

## New Aetna Phone Numbers for MHSA

Aetna U.S. Healthcare has changed its telephone numbers for Mental Health and Substance Abuse benefits. The new numbers are: 1-800-424-5668 (VA) and 1-800-424-5732 (DC&MD).

## Updated Membership Data for HMOs

Electronic updates on membership have been provided to Trigon each day and to the regional plans two times each month (around the 1<sup>st</sup> and mid-month). Good news! Beginning February 20, this data also will be available to the regional carriers on a daily basis. But remember that because of processing time, there may be a delay in the ability of members to access their benefits.

## Important Membership Reminder

Consider this scenario: *Two state employees are married to each other. They have no dependents to enroll in a health plan. May they choose a dual membership?*

**Answer:** No. Each must choose the *Employee Single* membership. However, by enrolling in two *Single* memberships, each has the opportunity to select a different health plan. Two married state employees who do wish to cover dependents are eligible only for Double State married membership.

